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ABSTRACT

Moving children from a psychiatric treatment facility to community schools presents significant challenges for children, teachers, and families. This study examined the potential conflicts between the expectations of receiving teachers and the behaviors of elementary school students (N=17) using the Assessments for Integration into Mainstream Settings (AIMS) system. Two parts of the AIMS system were used. Receiving community school teachers completed the SBS Inventory of Teacher Social Behavior Standards and Expectations by rating adaptive behaviors as critical, desirable, or unimportant and rating maladaptive behaviors as unacceptable, tolerated, or acceptable. A comparable instrument was completed by hospital-based teachers. Potential conflicts were most often found in the areas of adaptability, self-direction, creating disturbances, and managing anger and frustration. Results provide limited support for the use of the SBS Inventory and comparison scale. The use of the two questionnaires revealed areas of conflict between expectations and behaviors, and the discrepancy between these ratings related to teachers' satisfaction with the transition process. These findings have implications for student and teacher education and the practical utility of using these instruments as a routine part of the transition procedure. (NB)

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Do Teachers' Behavioral Expectations Effect the Transition from a Psychiatric Program to Community Schools?

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Running head: BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

Abstract

Moving children from a psychiatric treatment facility to community schools presents significant challenges for children, teachers and families. This study examined the potential conflicts between the expectations of receiving teachers and the behaviours of students using the AIMS system developed by Walker et al. (1984). Potential conflicts were most often found in the areas of adaptability, self-direction, creating disturbances, and managing anger and frustration. Results are discussed in terms of the implications for student and teacher education and the practical utility of using these instruments as a routine part of the transition procedure.

Do Teachers' Behavioral Expectations Effect the Transition from a Psychiatric Program to Community Schools?

Children with severe emotional and behavioural problems present significant challenges to teachers. They are frequently referred to specialized programs that can provide in-depth assessment and treatment. However, while these children can often benefit from short-term experiences within a segregated setting, the ultimate objective is to enable the children to move out of this type of environment and to function in community schools. For children, parents and teachers, this transition back to the community can be difficult, and the ultimate success of the placement may be dependent on how the transition is managed. There is little information in the literature concerning this transition process for special education students. While there is information about the types of settings in which children are placed (e.g., Sanche & Dahl, 1991; Swan, Brown, & Jacob, 1987), and about the types of receiving programs that are most successful (e.g., Biklen, 1985; Meyer, Eichinger, & Park-Lee, 1987; Wong, Kauffman, & Lloyd, 1991), there is little research-supported information about how to make the transition itself as effective as possible.

The first step in the transition is the selection of an appropriate classroom. In selecting an appropriate classroom setting for a child, it is necessary to consider the type of program offered, the classroom environment, and the characteristics of the receiving teacher. A number of researchers have addressed the problems involved in describing the classroom environment in sufficient detail to permit a careful assessment of the student skills required for successful performance in that setting. Hoier, McConnell, and Pallay (1987) formulated a template-matching observational method, using detailed observations of both the child being transferred and a target child in the receiving classroom, to provide a detailed description of the classroom environment as it exists for different children. Salend and Viglianti

(1982) used a combined observation and interview schedule to describe the expectations for students in the new setting so that the transferring teachers could work to prepare the child for that specific situation. Similarly, Wong et al. (1991) explored ways of matching the student and the general classroom teacher using classroom observations of general teacher characteristics and also specific variables relevant to the student being transferred.

Fuchs, Fuchs, Fernstrom, and Hohn (1991) have taken the issue of matching student to classroom one step further. Using an adaptation of Anderson's transenvironmental programming, they identified skills required in the new setting, and focused instruction on the acquisition of these skills before the transfer. The observations and training required were time-consuming (research assistants alone spent an average of 20 hours per student). However, the authors indicated that the process was helpful in moving students into community programs who otherwise would more likely have remained in the special education setting.

While the types of detailed observations described in these studies may be helpful, they are also extremely time-consuming. For a program that transfers a significant number of students each year, the cost for routine use would be extremely high. The AIMS system (Assessments for Integration into Mainstream Settings) which was developed by Walker (1986) may have more practical utility. This assessment system consists of five instruments, including three questionnaires asking for teacher ratings of different types of behaviours, and two observation protocols. All are based on ecological assessment procedures, and produce information concerning the behavioural expectations of new settings. The different assessment instruments can be used independently, and they are suitable for use by both regular and classroom teachers.

The AIMS questionnaires have been shown to be sensitive to differences between special education and regular classroom teachers, and to cultural differences (Walker & Lamon, 1987). Scores correlate significantly with direct observations of teachers' behaviour (Walker

& Rankin, 1983a, in press), reading achievement (Walker, in press) and other classroom inventories (Deci, Schwartz, Scheiman, & Ryan, 1981; Mandell & Strain, 1978). The use of these questionnaires may facilitate the transition to community schools by enabling the transferring teachers to relate the behavioural traits of the child to the receiving teacher's tolerance levels for those behaviours.

In addition to the need to choose an appropriate setting, the ideal transition mechanism requires effective information exchange and teacher support. Rocha, Wiley, and Watson (1982) discuss the importance of preparing teachers for special students and the need to establish conditions of trust and rapport between the special educator and the receiving teacher if suggestions about classroom management and adaptations of teaching style are to be received and implemented. Similarly, Riegel (1983) found that some suggestions for changes were quite willingly received by teachers while others were perceived as being so difficult to arrange that teachers were unwilling to try them within their classrooms. These studies imply that follow-up of the transition is necessary, and that those communicating with regular classroom teachers must be sensitive to the demands and conditions within this setting. Salend (1983) stresses the need for follow-up to evaluate placements, to address emerging concerns about the education of the child, and to evaluate the adequacy of the special education program and the transition strategy.

The purpose of the study reported here was to explore the practical utility of an ecological assessment tool for facilitating the transition between a hospital-based school program and community-based programs. Specifically, two parts of the AIMS system were used to assess student behaviours and teacher expectations and to examine the 'match' between the student and teacher. Discrepancies between teacher expectations and child behaviours were then related to variables indicating satisfaction with the transition and time spent in the transition process.

Method

Subjects

Data was collected for 17 elementary school students who transferred out of the Child and Family Psychiatry Unit (CFPU) school program between February 1991 and March 1992. (Students transferring near the end of the academic year were excluded from the study because of the lack of followup opportunity). The students were 65% male with an average age of 10.1 years (age range 7 to 13 years). Testing with the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement revealed wide variability in academic performance among the 17 students. While the general achievement level was in the low average range, a few children scored over the 80th percentile.

The CFPU program provides in-patient treatment and education for children who require intensive social/emotional therapy from a team consisting of psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists, nurses and teachers. Children are generally involved in the program for a period ranging from 6 months to a year. DSM III diagnoses for the subjects of this study include schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, attention deficit disorder (with and without hyperactivity), conduct disorder, oppositional disorder, paranoid state, elective mutism, learning disabilities, affective disorder, depressive disorder, and Tourette syndrome.

The 17 students transferred from CFPU into a variety of settings. Twelve of the students (71%) went to regular classroom placements, with four of these (24%) receiving additional help from an aide or from resource room programs. The remainder went to segregated (18%) or integrated (12%) special education programs.

Procedure

When a child was identified as being ready to move to community schools, the hospital teacher rated his/her behaviour; data was collected on the transition process; and the receiving teacher was asked to complete a questionnaire indicating the behavioural

expectations in the classroom. Hospital teachers documented the types of contact that occurred during the transition and the amount of time spent. Six weeks after the transfer, the receiving teacher and the parents were asked to complete questionnaires indicating their experience of the transition process.

Two parts of the AIMS system developed by Walker and his colleagues were used to collect information about student behaviour and teacher expectations. In the SBS Inventory of Teacher Social Behavior Standards and Expectations (Walker & Rankin, 1980), receiving teachers were asked to rate adaptive behaviours as critical, desirable or unimportant and to rate maladaptive behaviours as unacceptable, tolerated or acceptable. The behaviours listed are those which often cause resistance to mainstreaming. The authors developed the Walker-Rankin Rating Scale of Adaptive and Maladaptive Child Behavior in School (Walker & Rankin, 1983b) as a companion instrument to the SBS Inventory, and contains similar items. Using this instrument, the hospital-based teachers rated the child's behaviours. These were then compared to the receiving teacher's expectations. Questionnaires to assess teachers' and parents' feelings about the transition were developed specifically for this project.

Results

SBS Results

Using the SBS, community school teachers indicated their expectations concerning a wide variety of different behaviours. They rated adaptive behaviours as critical, desirable or unimportant for successful adjustment in their classrooms, and maladaptive behaviours as unacceptable, tolerated or acceptable. For the purposes of this analysis, these items were numerically coded from 1 to 3, with 1 indicating critical adaptive behaviours and unacceptable maladaptive behaviours. Table 1 presents results for the receiving teachers, along with corresponding results from Walker (1984) for comparison.

Receiving teachers in this study rated 31% of the adaptive behaviours as 'critical' and only 3% as

'unimportant'. These are higher expectations for adaptive behaviours than those reported by either the regular or special education elementary school teachers in Walker's study, but the differences are not statistically significant. Of the maladaptive behaviours, 52% were unacceptable and only .01% were acceptable. This reaction to maladaptive behaviour was similar to Walker's results.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 2 indicates the specific behaviours that were rated by teachers as the most or least critical for children in their classrooms. Critical items tend to reflect a need for classroom order and compliance with rules. Almost none of the adaptive items were considered 'unimportant'. Those items that were considered to be least important generally reflect interactions with peers. The maladaptive items that are most frequently rated as unacceptable are those related to aggression, anger and sexuality/obscenity. These are all behaviours which, even at very low frequencies, are unacceptable in classrooms. Similar to the adaptive behaviours, few maladaptive behaviours were considered to be acceptable. Those most tolerated are those which relate to interactions with peers and to inappropriate talking. These item scores are very consistent with those of Walker (1984), even for this small and mixed group of teachers. They appear to indicate that teachers' strongest demands of children relate more to maintenance of classroom order than to peer interactions.

Insert Table 2 about here

<u>WR Rating Scale</u>

This is a parallel scale to the SBS Inventory. Hospital teachers completed the questionnaire for each of the outgoing children before the transition. Results are presented in Table 3. On average, these children were considered to be acceptably skilled in terms of using equipment properly and in complying with rules and direct demands from teachers. On the other hand, they were least skilled in tasks requiring

attention, self-direction and flexibility. Of the maladaptive behaviours, these children are perceived to be dependent and demanding, and not coping when things do not go their way. On a more positive note, these children also evidenced few of the behaviours that the receiving teachers found most objectionable, such as aggression, obscenity, cheating and stealing.

Consistency between SBS and WR ratings

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether these two instruments would be useful in identifying the areas in which teachers' expectations and the children's behaviours were most in conflict. To examine this issue, a conflict score was calculated. For adaptive items, a conflict was counted if the teacher indicated that the skill was critical and the child was rated as less than (or considerably less than) acceptably skilled. A conflict was also counted if the skill was considered desirable and the child was considerably less than acceptably skilled. A parallel system was used for rating conflict for maladaptive behaviours.

From these item conflict scores, a total conflict score was calculated for each transitioned child. (Conflicts on all questions would result in a score of 107.) Scores for total conflict ranged from 8 to 53, with a mean of 29.3 (S.D.= 14.6). Table 3 indicates the items in which there was the most conflict between the expectations of the receiving teacher and the child's behaviour. Generally, the most inconsistencies were in areas of flexibility, self-direction, attention, and ability to cope with failure or not getting one's own way. There were considerably more expectation conflicts in terms of the maladaptive behaviours, particularly in the areas of anger, distractibility, and creating disturbances in classrooms. For these children, most of the areas where there was no conflict in expectations reflect items which teachers rated as unimportant or acceptable.

Insert Table 3 about here

Relationship to Satisfaction Ratings

It was hypothesized that teachers and parents would report more satisfaction with the transition process when the child's social behaviours were more consistent with teacher expectations. To address this question, summary satisfaction scores were calculated for both the parent and the teacher satisfaction questionnaires. Satisfaction expressed by parents had very low correlations with measures of conflict. For receiving teachers, however, there is moderate, negative relationship ($r = -.52$) between their rated satisfaction and the conflict score. There is also a positive relationship between their satisfaction and the number of maladaptive behaviours that were rated as nonexistent ($r = .55$). (See Table 4).

Insert table 4 about here

During the transition period, hospital-based teachers devoted a great deal of time to transition communication. On average, teachers spent almost 5 hours in meetings and conversations with receiving teachers, parents, etc. (Range 2.2 - 4.5 hours). The average number of contacts was 12.1, again with a wide range (from 4 to 24). While the degree of mis-match between the child and the teacher might be thought to relate directly to the amount of time spent in the transition process, this was not found to be the case. Neither the total amount of time spent nor the total number of contacts correlated with the satisfaction measures (Pearson r range: -.21 to .07).

Conclusions

The results presented here provide limited support for the use of The SBS Inventory of Teacher Social Behavior Standards and Expectations along with the companion questionnaire, the Walker-Rankin Rating Scale of Adaptive and Maladaptive Child Behavior in School. The use of the two questionnaires did reveal areas of conflict between expectations and behaviours, and the discrepancy between these ratings did relate to teachers' satisfaction with the transition process. However, conflict ratings were also hypothesized to be

related to the amount of time spent by teachers in the transition, and this was not the case.

It appears that the two parts of the AIMS system used here can be used to identify areas in which there are discrepancies between the expectations of the receiving teacher and the behaviours of the child, and that they can provide information concerning the transition. However, given that the most conflict was identified involved in relatively complex behaviours (flexibility, self-direction and adaptability, management of anger, distractibility), the results may not be useful in practice. Once a child has been identified as being ready for the transition there is unlikely to be time available for remediation of these complex skills.

The AIMS system could, however, be used in a number of different ways: a) To identify a teacher whose expectations are minimally discrepant from the behaviours of the child. In this community, however, constraints such as location of home, school resources and programs restrict selection of the receiving teachers. Where there are only one or two teachers who could take the child, the use of the AIMS may not be warranted to aid in teacher selection. b) To identify specific behaviours that need to be changed prior to the transition. The usefulness of this procedure will depend greatly on the behaviours which are identified. While it may be realistic to attempt to change some behaviours in the brief period between identification of a receiving classroom and the actual move, the highest conflict scores were generally in areas that are extremely difficult to remediate. For many children, they may be part of the underlying disorder, and may always need to be managed. c) To pinpoint areas of need for inservice with receiving teachers to help them to work more effectively with the identified problems. More emphasis needs to be placed on working with the receiving teachers to help them to develop strategies for working with the child in ways which adapt to the specific areas of conflict. This may involve the creation/selection of information packages and resources that would provide information about the child and practical strategies for classroom teachers.

All of these strategies involve helping specific

teachers work with specific children. However, the situation is further confounded by the reality that, in most community schools, children move into a new classroom with a new teacher every September. This means that students must be taught strategies that will apply in a variety of classroom situations. This in turn points to the use of the AIMS as a research tool to expand this pilot study to confirm the areas of most conflict so that resources can be directed in the most appropriate ways.

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Table 1
Patterns of Teacher Responses on the Inventory of Teacher Social Behavior Standards and Expectations (SBS): Number of Questions Given Each Rating

SBS Responses	Receiving Teachers n = 13		Walker (1984) Regular Elementary n = 50		Special Education Elementary n = 22	
Adaptive Behaviors	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Critical	17.31	15.37	12.78	13.12	9.13	12.62
Desirable	36.23	13.93	39.70	12.30	40.63	12.14
Unimportant	1.85	3.05	3.50	5.80	6.22	8.60
Maladaptive Behaviors						
Unacceptable	26.46	11.55	27.96	9.14	25.22	12.76
Tolerated	23.23	11.58	22.22	8.79	25.00	12.35
Acceptable	0.38	0.77	0.82	1.73	0.77	1.79

Table 2
High and Low Rated Items from the Inventory of Teacher Social Behavior Standards and Expectations (SBS)

Mean (S.D.)	Adaptive Items: Critical
1.31 (.48)	Listens while other pupils are speaking.
1.31 (.48)	Listens carefully to teacher instructions and directions for assignments.
1.33 (.49)	Complies with teacher commands.
1.38 (.51)	Can have normal conversations with peers without becoming hostile or angry.
1.38 (.51)	Is honest with others.
1.38 (.51)	Expresses anger appropriately.
	Adaptive Items: Unimportant
2.38 (.51)	Volunteers for classroom activities.
2.38 (.51)	Sits up straight in seat during classroom instruction.
2.15 (.38)	Initiates conversation with peers in informal situations.
2.08 (.51)	Compliments peers regarding some attributes or behavior.
2.08 (.29)	Resolves peer conflicts or problems adequately on her or his own without requesting teacher assistance.
2.00 (.00)	Uses social conventions appropriately.
2.00 (.41)	Can recognize and describe moods or feelings of others and self.
Mean (S.D.)	**Maladaptive Items: Unacceptable**
1.00 (.00)	Is physically aggressive with others.
1.00 (.00)	Damages others' property.
1.00 (.00)	Is self-abusive.
1.08 (.29)	Is verbally aggressive with others.
1.08 (.28)	Uses obscene language.
1.08 (.28)	Behaves inappropriately in class when corrected.
1.08 (.29)	Pupil makes lewd or obscene gestures.
1.08 (.28)	Pupil engages in inappropriate sexual behavior.

	Maladaptive Items: Acceptable
2.08 (.49)	Refuses to play games with other children.
2.00 (.41)	Asks irrelevant questions.
2.00 (.00)	Talks out of turn.
1.92 (.28)	Refuses to share.
1.85 (.38)	Makes remarks or asks questions that are irrelevant to classroom discussions.
1.83 (.39)	Pouts or sulks.
1.83 (.39)	Ignores the social initiations of other children.

Table 3
High and Low Rated Items from Walker-Rankin Rating Scale of Adaptive and Maladaptive Child Behavior in School (WR)

Mean (S.D.)	Adaptive Items: Highest Skills
1.06 (.24)	Uses classroom equipment and materials properly.
1.07 (.26)	Uses playground equipment appropriately.
1.24 (.66)	Answers or attempts to answer a question when called on by the teacher.
1.25 (.45)	Raises hand before asking a question (where appropriate).
1.29 (.69)	Uses academic tools correctly.
1.29 (.47)	Complies with teacher commands.
1.29 (.47)	Follows established classroom rules.
1.29 (.47)	Can participate in and contribute to group instructional situations/activities.
1.29 (.47)	Initiates conversation with peers in informal situations.
Mean (S.D.)	**Adaptive Items: Lowest Skills**
2.06 (.75)	Is flexible and can adjust to different instructional situations.
2.00 (.63)	Resolves peer conflicts or problems adequately on her/his own without requesting teacher assistance.
1.94 (.77)	Has independent study skills.
1.94 (.75)	Ignores the distractions or interruptions of other students during academic activities.
1.88 (.60)	Copes with failure in an appropriate manner.
1.88 (.62)	Can accept not getting his/her own way.
1.88 (.78)	Attends consistently to assigned tasks.
Mean (S.D.)	**Maladaptive Items: Least Frequent**
1.00 (.00)	Is self-abusive.
1.06 (.24)	Engages in inappropriate sexual behavior.
1.24 (.44)	Makes lewd or obscene gestures.
1.29 (.59)	Uses obscene language.
1.29 (.47)	Is overly affectionate with other children and/or adults.
1.31 (.60)	Is physically aggressive with others.
1.31 (.48)	Engages in silly, attention-getting behavior.

Mean (S.D.)	Maladaptive Items: Most Frequent
2.35 (.70)	Displays high levels of dependence.
2.29 (.69)	Becomes visibly upset or angry when things do not go his/her way.
2.19 (.66)	Is easily distracted from the task or activity at hand.
2.12 (.60)	Interrupts the teacher when the teacher is engaged in a presentation or activity.
2.07 (.62)	Is not responsible for her/himself.
2.06 (.56)	Does not follow and/or give in to necessary rules of games and class activities.
2.06 (.66)	Child pouts or sulks.

Table 4
Items with the Highest and Lowest Conflict Scores

% of Ratings	Adaptive Items: Highest Conflict Score
85	Is flexible and can adjust to different instructional situations.
54	Has independent study skills.
54	Attends consistently to assigned tasks.
46	Ignores the distractions or interruptions of other students during academic activities.
46	Can accept not getting his or her own way.
46	Copes with failure in an appropriate manner.
46	Communicates adequately.
	Maladaptive Items: Highest Conflict Score
77	Becomes visibly upset or angry when things do not go his/her way.
77	Does not ask permission to use others' property.
69	Displays high levels of dependence.
69	Is easily distracted from the task or activity at hand.
62	Disturbs or disrupts the activities of others.
62	Creates a disturbance during class activities.
62	Interrupts the teacher when the teacher is engaged in a presentation or activity.
62	Does not follow and/or give in to necessary rules of games and class activities.
62	Reacts negatively to assigned school work.

Table 5
Correlations Between Satisfaction Ratings and Rating Summaries

	Parent Satisfaction	Receiving Teacher Satisfaction
Conflicts:		
Adaptive Behavior	-.14	-.45
Maladaptive Behavior	-.02	-.46
Total	-.09	-.52
Receiving Teacher Ratings (SBS)		
No. of Adaptive Items Rated 'Critical'	-.01	-.37
No. of Maladaptive Items Rated 'Unacceptable'	.36	-.14
Child Ratings (WR)		
No. of Adaptive Items Rated 'Acceptably Skilled'	.17	.19
No. of Maladaptive Items Rated 'Nonexistent'	.29	.55

Note. SBS refers to the Inventory of Teacher Social Behavior Standards and Expectations and WR refers to the Walker-Rankin Rating Scale of Adaptive and Maladaptive Child Behavior in School.